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ABSTRACT

The barangay high schools (BHS) in rural areas of the Philippines were established by villagers to provide relevant education that combined features of a formal academic school system with a nonformal vocational system. Historical periods of the development of the BHS system were: (1) period of introduction and experimentation (1964-69); (2) period of legalization (1970-86); and (3) period of nationalization (1986-92). These stages coincide with national social and economic reform policies. Access to education increased dramatically with expanding BHS enrollments and the increasing financial capacity of parents. However, with increasing government participation, support, control, and finally takeover of these village schools, the original features of the system have been altered and lost. During the 1960s and 1970s, the BHS curriculum was more vocational than academic. After 1986, the BHS curriculum became more academic than vocational under the direct control of the national government. Besides extending opportunities for schooling, the BHS system achieved its educational goals by providing university education to an increasing number of graduates and by preparing large numbers of its high-school leavers for work after school. Parental and community support in terms of finances and services have diminished sharply from the first period to the third period of BHS development. (KS)

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THE ISSUE OF RELEVANT EDUCATION:

THEORIES AND REALITY

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THE ISSUE OF RELEVANT EDUCATION: THEORIES AND REALITY

Sec. 1 Relevant Education: Institutional Features and Integrative Functions of the Rural School

The issue on how best to provide relevant education in the rural high schools has long puzzled researchers and practitioners in the field, especially those in the third world until the present. On end of the research continuum are those who argue that provision of academic, university-preparatory education will form the basis of reform structure in the rural communities(Sinclair, Lillis, 1980)[1]. At the other end of the pendulum are those who claim that relevance can best be achieved by a provision of vocational, community-oriented training that will provide the labor force needed in rural transformation (Coombs, Ahmed, 1985). But the proponents of each side are confronted with the question of how best to overcome the limits of either the formal or the non-formal forms of learning. Some developing countries like Malaysia, however, have realized that a shift from the formal to the more vocational-oriented forms of learning is necessary (A. Ghose, 1983)[2]. In a country like the Philippines, where social orientation has always been geared towards the completion of some kind of formal schooling, the other alternative forms of learning did not get its needed support(Valisno Mona, 1985). There is a need to strike a balance between these two poles.

The crisis in formal education

The scarce distribution and inaccessibility of high schools in the countryside have shown the most acute problem in formal education in the third world. This is compounded by the teething problem of financial home constraints, as well as the irrelevance of the school curriculum. With the exception of a few private schools, the curriculum of the regular academic high schools remains an irrelevant thing, alienated from the particular conditions and needs of the local community they serve.(UNESCO Report, 1982). In the Philippines, the type of course offerings offered in the rural high schools until the 1960's have been dominated by colonial culture, inappropriate to the indigenous culture of the rural communities. (Watson, 1984)

The merits and limits of the non-formal education

A motley assortment of sytematically organized and semi-organized educational activities carried outside the framework of the formal school system are available (Ahmed and Coombs). Like the formal school system, however, the non-formal forms of learning are not without their demerits. The first problem with the non-formal mode concerns the permanence of its impact. The major problem is the lack of continuing support for the program, and for the most part, trainings given were not sufficiently linked to realistic job opportunities in the rural communities. Furthermore, this out-of-school education, being extremely specific, results in confining the youth in certain form of activity and denies them access to higher levels of schooling (Basabas, 1988).

The BHS System as a solution

The relevance called for in a rural school, particularly in the third world, lies in its capacity to integrate the features of the formal - regular, academic - school system (FS) and those of the non-formal system (NFS). It provides for an academic, university-oriented training for those who will lead in the reform structure in the rural areas. At the same time, it offers a strong vocational, community-oriented training to provide the labor force needed in rural transformation. The case of the Philippine barangay (formerly known as barrio) or village schools serves to illustrate this point.

A barangay high school is a self-help secondary school in the remote areas of the Philippines. It is established by the village folks in the villages for the village children, run and maintained by the village people. The problem of distance between the schools and the rural homes has been one of the pressing problems that affect attendance in rural schools not only in the third world, but also in some developed nations, as well.[3] It was conceived as a solution to the acute shortage of opportunity of high school education in the rural communities(Orata, 1978). There are two kinds of youth who grow up in a barangay with respect to their future work and residence: those who will leave the barrio and those who will stay. For those who will leave the barrio and pursue higher studies, the system offers a general academic and college preparatory curriculum, and for those who will stay, live and work in the village, the school offers training for farm productivity and farm employment.

An analysis of the elements that make up the BHS system was conducted by using the structural elements of a school system developed by Kuwahara(1989). These elements include the traditional concept of input, throughput and output elements of a learning institution (Mosteller, 1972). The findings revealed that the unique institutional features of the BHS system by which it could accomplish its integrative function can best be summarized in the following table[4].

Table 1

FEATURES OF THE ORIGINAL BHS SYSTEM

INSTITUTION/	SCHOOL	BHS	NFE
1. Target group	13-17 yrs. =elementary graduates	13-17 yrs. =elementary graduates	various, small groups - youth included
2. Educl. Objectives	general, basic university-prep.	university-prep. work after h.s.	varied:(1) specific skills: for income, for work, (2) for information
3. Provisions for Access/ Admissions Requirements	completion of elementary level	completion of elementary level	none
4. Teaching/Learning Organizatiion School Days	four years M-F fixed, regular	four year flexible, class hours	limited period short duration flexible times
5. Staff/ Media	Govt. recognized teachers	Govt. recognized teachers, and agricultural, extension workers	according to establishing body:
6. Educational Evaluation	grading system regular exams	grading system regular exams	none
7. Transfer to Higher Schooling Levels	college-preparatory curriculum	college-preparatory curriculum	terminal
8. Establishment Sites	school districts/ towns	barrio	varied
9. Establishing Body	government national and local	community/ barrio people	government and private agencies

The table illustrates that like the formal school system, the BHS system is a continuous progran conducted within a formal grading system within a definite period f four years, following a formal academic standardized curriculum prescribed by the Ministry of Education. Because it serves the function of the secondary level of schooling, it requires the completion of elementary education for admission. The procedures for and the selection of its staff and teachers, to a certain extent, fall within the prescribed rules of the Ministry of Education.

Like the NFS it provides for strong skills-oriented, work-oriented types of activities through its varied vocational and practical offerings that are organized and implemented with the consent of the village people in accordance with the conditions and circumstances of the rural communities. The flexibility in its institutional arrangements, particularly in class scheduling[5] allows the students to engage in activities to earn for their schooling expenses and at the same time pursue their academic training. Aside from the regualr classroom teachers which it shares in common with the academic high schools, the BHS system utilizes the services of the agricultural extension workers for the successful implementation of its work-oriented curriculum.

These discussions on the unique institutional features of the BHS system can best be summarized in the diagram below.

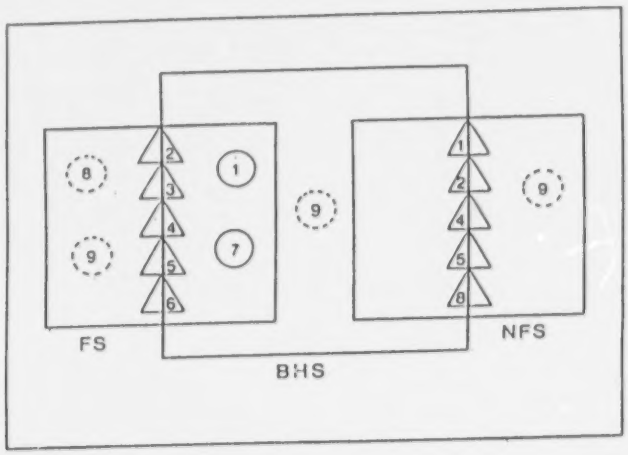

Fig. 1

EDUCATION IN THE RURAL AREAS: THE BHS SUB-SYSTEM

NOTE: The numbers in the figure indicate the institutional features of each sub-system as they are used in the table on page 71. The overlapping points designate the characteristics which the BHS system shares with each of the sub-systems. The circles in full lines indicate the traits which the sub-systems fully share, and the circles in broken lines indicate the features that only that particular sub-system possesses.

BHS as a school: (1) target groups, (2) educational objectives, (3) provisions for access, (5) media, (6) educational evaluation, (7) possibilities for transfer, and (4) period of schooling.

BHS as a NFE: (1) target group (2) educational objectives and content; (4) flexibility in time arrangements, (5) media, (8) place of establishment

Sec. 2: Historical Development and National Control

No records suggest the clear division of the stages in the development of the BHS system, but by working on available materials, three historical periods could be identified, and can be roughly termed as follows: (1) the period of introduction and experimentation (1964-69), (2) the period of legalization (1970-'86), and (3) the period of Nationalization (1986-'92).These stages coincide with national reform policies and are summarized in the figure below.

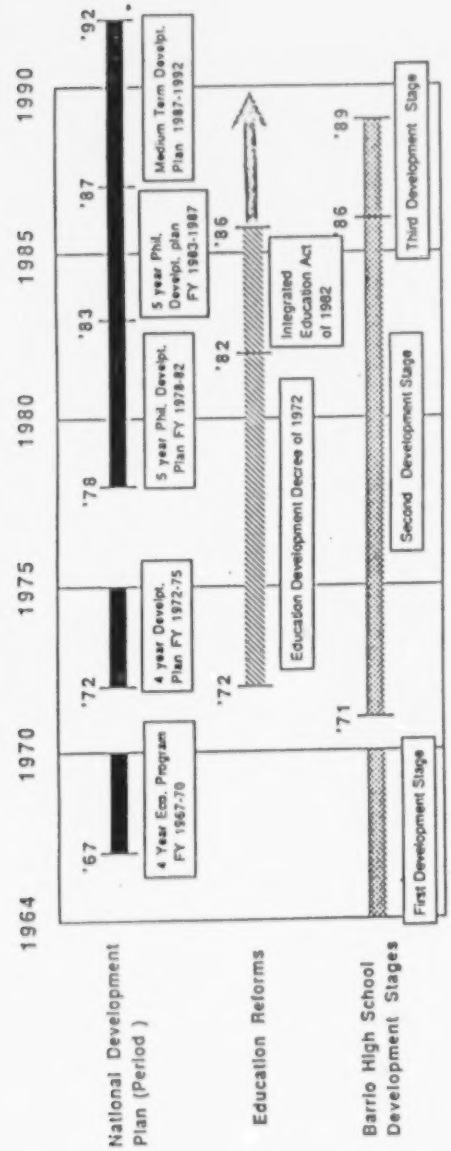

Fig. 2 BHS Development Stages Within Phil. Development Plan Periods

The study suggest that with the gradual and increasing government participation, support and control, and finally takeover of these village schools, the original features of the system

presented in Sec. 1 above have been gradually and increasingly altered, and finally, altogether lost. The extent of national participation in and control of these schools are discussed in Sec. 3 below.

Sec. 3 National policies and expansion of educational opportunity

The issue on the expansion of educational opportunity - or access - as it shall be used here, in the third world, needs be given a more important concern, if not as important as the issue on equality of opportunity in education today. The term access to education is narrowed down here to mean schooling opportunities; yet it encompasses the traditional concept of availability of seats (Dyer, 1972). This study has assumed that a study on the BHS system, as an educational sub-system in the rural areas, implies a consideration of the economic conditions of the rural household, as Richards has proposed in his study on the relation of economics to rural schooling (1981). Richards proposes that access is defined in terms of the capacity of the parents to send their children to school as well as in terms of the outcomes of schooling. This study maintains that access need be defined in terms of both these as well as in consideration of the capacity of the rural schools. By looking into the structural elements of the system, this study has examined the capacity of rural schools to keep the students in school. By relating national policies to rural household income - to discussed below, this study has looked into the capacity of the rural households to send their children to school. This section focusses on the concept of attendance as a measure of extending access to high school education.

Existing theories on the measurement of educational access are varied, multi-faceted, and of course conflicting (Mosteller, Bennett, Bowles). The measurement of educational opportunity in a developing country like the Philippines, particularly with regard to formal schooling, can not rely on a purely theoretical framework alone. It has to take into consideration the sad reality of the deprived economic background of majority of the student population. The issue in focus does not necessarily concern equality - which refers to the sameness in the kind of instruction givern to rural children and those in the cities. Neither is it concerned with the sameness in the kind of instruction given to children in different schools in the rural areas. Rather, it centers on the more urgent and more pressing problems of extending access to schooling that is relevant, and by relevant means suitable to the unique needs of those not reached by the conventional modes of learning which the government ought to but could not reach.

Section 1 above has discussed the features of the BHS system which were responsible for the system's role in providing a relevant integrative education. This section will present relevance in terms of expansion of schooling opportunties made possible through the numerical growth of these schools. An examination of the extent to which the BHS system has extended some kind of high school education to rural children inevitably necessitates a look into the quantitative growth of these schools. Thus the first essential thing was to concentrate on the numerical expansion of the schools and their enrollment.

More then numerical expansion, however, the issue on access implies that a study on the rural schools necessitates a consideration of the economic conditions of the rural households. The severe dropout problems in the Phil. educational system has been caused commonly by children having to help in family income, and / or take care of siblings at home while parents are away to look for livelihood[6].

3.1. From the first BHS established in 1964 until 1969, the BHS system inceased at a rate of 27%, and enrollment was up to 30% during this period. Although there were no direct efforts extended by the natonal government on the BHS system, the remarkable growth of these schools was an aftermath of the national economic policies. National development

thrusts during the years that coincided with the first stage of BHS development consisted of social development priority in the rural ares to reduce the rising communist insurgency in the 1960's to be accomplished by an economic development priority on increasing agricultural production in the rural areas. Implementing reforms in the countryside meant extensive community development program launched to reach thousands of villages activated the rural communities and provided a fitting stimuli for barangay animation and participation in the vocational offerings of the BHS.

Simultaneously an essential strategy for educational development was the enlargement of the formal school system, particularly of the elementary level. Expansion of the elementary schools meant increase in buildings that helped fan the growth of the BHS during the first few years of its establishment.

Despite national efforts to increase income in the rural areas, regional and household income level during these years was on the whole, low. The tremendous increase in the BHS and their enrollment seem to indicate that if the national policies on rural development affected rural households at all, it was in the sense that agricultural activities in the countryside provided the manpower which helped rural households implement the esential vocational curiculum of the first BHS in the 1960's. Barrio animation which served to trigger BHS increase, compensated for the disadvantaged financial incapacity of the rural households[7].

3.2. Five years after their establishment on an experimental basis, the BHS having spread widely across the various regions of the country, was given legal recognition in 1969 with the institution of the Barrio High School Charter and its implementing rules and regulations which took effect on July 1, 1970.

In 1975, the BHS number was up by 53% from 1970, accounting for 40% of the total number of high schools, and 78% of the existing local government schools at that time. The expansion was down to 23% in 1985, which was still significant because the BHS comprised 79% of the local government schools then. Meanwhile enrollment rate increased by 23% from 1970 to 1980, and still increasing further to 56% in 1985. Of the total number of high school enrollment in 1985, 47.5% were receing their high school education from barangay high schools. The continued expansion of the BHS system and the consequent increase in its enrollment no doubt indicates the system's capacity to extend access to high school education in the rural ares.

The second period of BHS development coincided with major social and economic reforms to achieve the country's development goals. The national priority goal in the middle of the '70's was to achieve and maintain an accelerating rate of economic development, to be achieved by widespread employment and increase in per capita particularly in the rural areas. Regional development programs were given emphasis and reforms in administrative structure were accompanied by regionalization which served as a vehicle for implementing income-generating projects in the countryside. In the 1980's the integrated area development strategy program served to strengthen the function of implementing reforms in the countryside.

The overall expansion of the BHS following the implementation of the BHS Charter in 1970 was hastened by the sweeping economic reforms set out by the government from the early 1970's to the middle of the following decade. Direct government assistance in terms of financial aid to the BHS system started to be felt in the 1970's particularly with the reorganization of the financing structure in government schools. The Education Development Decree of 1972 paved the way for a more concrete strategy towards improving educational access in the high school level, strengthening secondary education programmes towards vocational, agricultural curriculum.This and other efforts such as national establishment of BHS for purposes of developing them into functional centers fanned the growht of the schools.This and other efforts such as national establishment of BHS for purposes of developing them into functional

centers fanned the growth of the schools.

National policy responses towards expansion of educational access took another form especially in the 1980's, not simply be enlarging the school system, but by democratization of education by fitting different types of learning according to the needs and capabilities of the rural children and the realities of the rural communities. The task involved developing insights and establishing institutions to extend some type of education to those not reached by the conventional modes of learning. The availability of alternative forms of education can be interpreted to have attracted rural children and can be interpreted to have caused the slight decline in the rate of increase in the 1980's, but the education reforms of the period provided a fitting and timely stimuli to enhancing the role of the BHS system in extending schooling opportunities in the countryside.

The creation of employment opportunities as a priority goal in the 70's and the implementation of various development programs resulted in increased per capita income and greater household income im the 15 year period following the first stage of BHS development. By increasing the financial capacity of the parents, the government has taken on a new dimension of educational access - it has provided the rural households a greater sending capacity to send their children to schools - other than the BHS - which were believed to be better in terms of academic standards. And yet the simultaneous expansion of the BHS system in the second period implies an equivalently strong capacity on the part of the BHS to attract and hold rural youth.

3.3. The first two periods saw a numerical expansion of the BHS system and the subsequent increase in enrollment. A reverse trend could be seen in the third period. Total BHS enrolment dropped by approximately 10% from 1985, although 85% of the total high school students were receiving their education from the BHS system. A decrease in the numerical growth of the schools was oserved from 1985 - 1987, although on the whole, these schools constituted an approximately 40% of the established public high schools in the rural areas.

The broad policies created by the national government in the years that coincided with the third stage of BHS development included most of all, agriculture and rural development. National development efforts from 1986 were, like in the previous years, geared towards raising the income capacity of the population by increasing employment opportunities in the rural areas. Rural-based strategies and employment-oriented policies were to be met by enhancing regional development and at the same time to combat insurgency problems. The rational of the educational development priority thrust in the third period was, unlike in the first two, on improvement of the quality of instruction while making use of the best available rsources.

Despite the assistance and programs directed towards the low-income groups, poverty situation was found to have worsened during the last years of the period under study. Larger number of families, higher poverty incidences and low regional productivity have been observed in the more developed and poorer regions, pointing out to a more uneven distribution of income. The specific strategies were not successful in achieving the goals of increasing the financial capacity of the parents. The change in the growth rate and a weakening of the function of the BHS system in terms of expansion of educational access during the third period can be attributed to a number of factors. On the one hand, the concrete steps taken by the new administration to implement policies on rural development, the creation of more opportunities - although on a large scale seemed to be a failure - for work and income focussed on the rural areas can be said to have attracted the youth to work rather than go to school, can be said to be the main factors in the slow but steady increase of the BHS system.

On the other hand, implementation of the social development policy on quality education in the mid '80's turned out to be a factor detrimental to the expansion of these schools.

National efforts for increased input were unlikely to produce equal results in terms of national standard; thus in the third period, national policy veered away from expansion towards improvement of instruction and quality education. Foremost among these was the implementation of the Nationalization Movement and the adoption of the Free Secondary Education Plan (FSEP)[8]. With Nationalization, all government public schools were placed under the complete control of the government, not excempting the BHS system. With the adoption of the FSEP the government sought to provide free secondary schooling to all students. The overall trend in the expansion of the BHS system as well as the increase in enrollment is shown in the following figures.

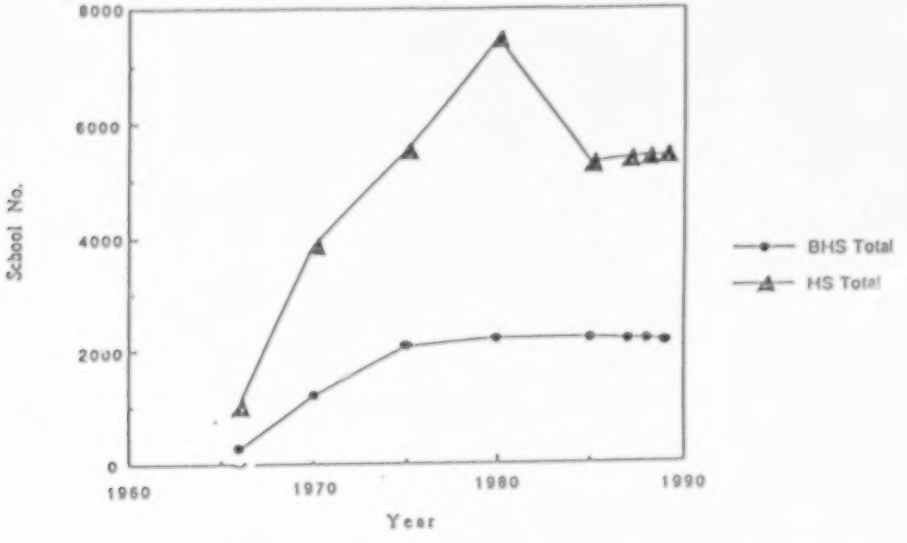

Fig. 3 Trend in the Growth of High School Number
Total National, Total BHS

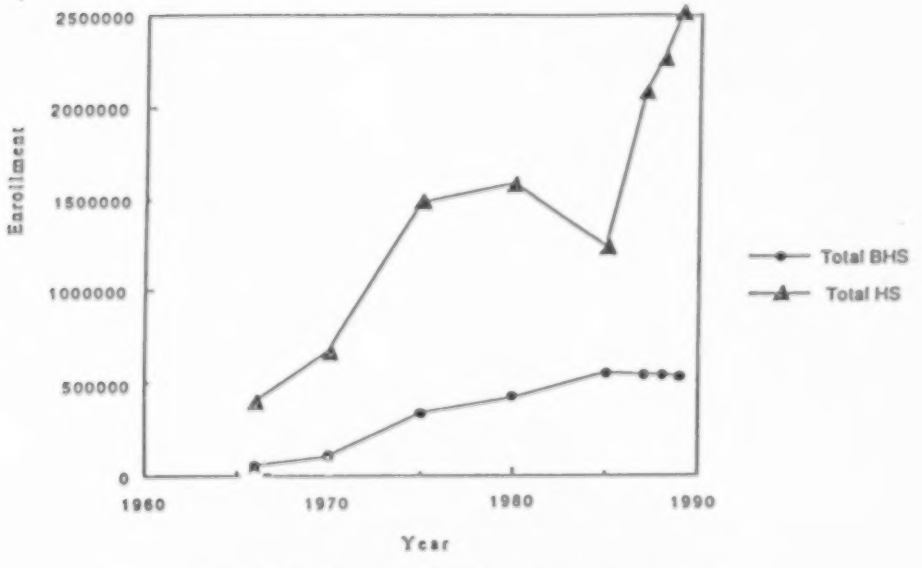

Fig. 4 Trend in the Growth of High School Enrollment :
Total National, Total BHS

Sec. 1 and Sec. 3 above have shown that the relevance of a rural school lies in its ability to integrate the elements and functions of both the formal and the non-formal system of learning as well as in its capacity to extend educational access. This was made possible by the unique institutional features of the school system. These functions have been influenced by the pendulum thrusts of the national socio-economic reforms. The following sections shall discuss the changes in some of the institutional elements of the BHS system, and how these alterations have affected the extent to which the BHS system has extended educational access to the rural communities in the Philippines as presented in Sec. 3 above.

Sec. 4 Changes in the institutional features of the BHS system

An investigation on how well the Phil. BHS sytem has performed its role in a rural setting necessitates primarily a background of the theories on school evaluation and school effectiveness (Reynolds, 1985). But one essential point is evident throughout all the theoretical discussions available, that is: any evaluation of school outcome can not overcome the objectives of the school. Any measurement done on how well the school is functioning has to take into consideration the history of the school, the broad evaluation goals from which it draws out its own resulting affective, cognitive and behavioral aims which affect its students. Thus this study has examined the extent to which the objectives of the BHS system were accomplished and how these objectives were reflected in the changing curriculum of the schools in each of the periods under study.

It has already been pointed out in the discussions above that the original educational objectives of the BHS systems was two-fold: to provide a university-preparatory academic training for those who will leave the barrio to pursue higher studies, and to provide vocational, skill-oriented life preparatory training for those who will stay in the barrio. This study aims to investigate the extent to which the system has achieved either or both of these objectives in the different periods of its development.

Two indexes were used to examine the degree to which the BHS system has attained this dual goal: one is the curriculum content of the schools (Payne, 1984), and the other is the status of the graduates.

1. BHS Curriculum:

(i) The findings indicate that in the 1960's the BHS curriculum was more vocational than academic. National policies for agricultural expansion and government thrusts for rural development reinforced the strength of the vocational orientation of these schools. They also helped absorb or create employment opportunities for majority of the graduates who were found to be working after high school.

(ii) The adoption of the BHS Charter in 1969 spelled out the integrated curriculum that was to be carried out in the 1970's, emphasizing a broad range of vocational experiences that varied according to the immediate needs and conditions of the local community. The implementation of the Revised Secondary Education Program in 1974, requiring all high schools to adopt a 60% vocational curriculum dictated, in principle, a further re-vocationalization of BHS instruction. In line with national development efforts in the 1970's towards industrialization by developing middle-level skills, the development-oriented curricula was implemented. This meant greater emphasis on vocational-technical education and re-training programmes to meet the needs of trained manpower and formation of skilled technicians.

(iii) From 1986, BHS curriculum was found out to have become more academic than vocational. Placing these rural schools under the direct control of the national government necessitates that the former follow the nationally prescribed curriculum (SDEP) which on paper, sound similar to those originally intended by the BHS. At the time of writing, however, the remains of the RSEP of 1972 is still strongly evident in the schools' curricular offerings. The outcomes of the SDEP, its influences on the quality of high school instruction, particularly of the BHS system, still have to be felt in the years following 1992, when the SDEP curriculum will be fully implemented.

2. BHS Graduates

Beside achieving its role of extending the opportunties for schooling, it can be said that the BHS system has achieved its educational goals by providing university education to an increasing number of graduates at each period under study: 20% in the first period, 40% and 50% in the second and third period, respectively. Furthermore, it has prepared a good number of its high school leavers for work after school by sending 30%, 40% and 30% of its graduates to work in the first, second and third periods, respectively. On the whole, the system has prepared more students for university than for work within these three periods.

When the curriculum was strongly emphasizing vocational courses, the system turned out more graduates to work after high school, as in Period 1.

When the curriculum was more integrated, as in the 70's and early 80's, the percentage of those who proceeded to the university was the same as those who worked after high school.

At the time of writing, when the curriculum was to emphasize quality education, and with the nationally introduced FSEP, the system turned out more graduates to the university than to work after high school. The status of BHS graduates in all the three periods is summarized in the graph below.

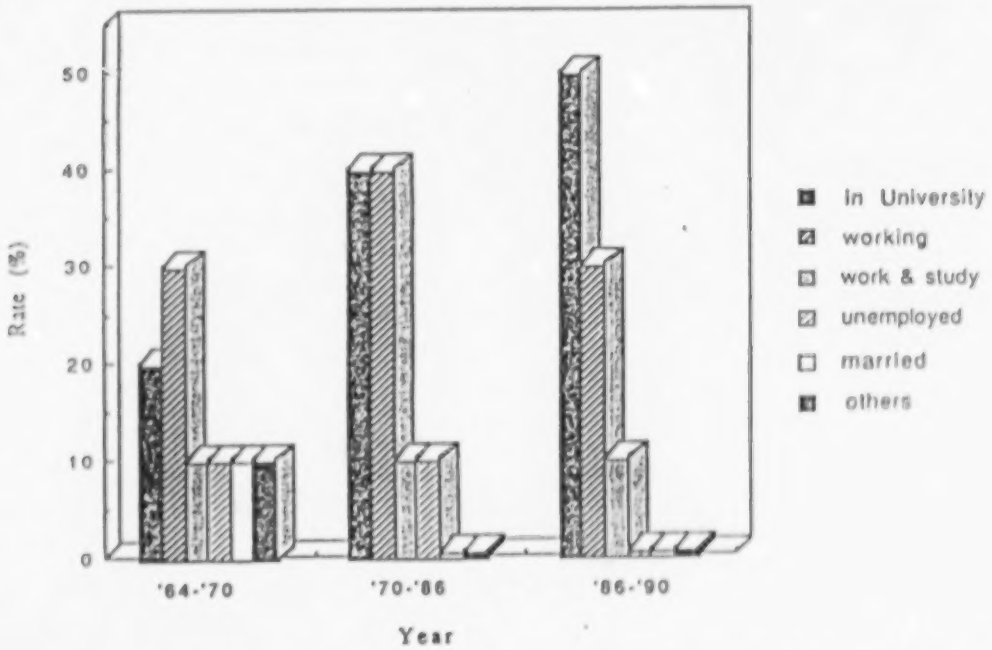

Fig. 5 Status of BHS Graduates in the Three Periods under Study

3. System of parental and community support:

Of equal importance of the theories on school evaluation to the study on the BHS system as a type of rural school system is the issue on rural development and rural transformation. If broadly conceived, rural development and rural transformation means changes not only in the methods of production and economic institutions, but of social and political infrastructures, as well as transformation of human relationship and opportunities, then the 3rd and 4th elements that deserve attention here are parental and community support, those factors that identify the BHS system and distinguish it from other forms of rural institutions.

Government supervision and regulatory support, and parental community management and control were complementary agents for BHS expansion. Both showed a shifting inverse relationship in each of the periods in focus.

(i) The results of the investigation suggest that in the first period, direct and indirect parental and community participation in the schools were said to be categorized in the ff. areas: (1) provision of finances, (2) provision of services, (3) provision of know-how, and (4) provision of materials. With the government concern towards countryside development through self-help and income generating projects, technical experts were on hand to assist the parents in the income-generating projects of the BHS.

(ii) In the second period, this role has not changed much. With changes in government financing system, the responsibility of financing, the BHS financing, although shared by the local government, was basically left to the parents and the community. The intensive implementation of livelihood projects in the countryside served to strengthen the participatory role of the local community on the system.

(iii) In the third period, however, complete reversal of role was inevitable with the implementation of the Nationalization program. The educational thrusts discussed in Sec. 3 above served to alter to a very large degree the degree of parental and community participation in the schools which in turn changed the character and functions of the BHS system.

4. System of financing: Changing the financing system is also very evident from period to period, and is inexplicably linked with the establishing body.

(i) In the first period, the main task of financing the system lay with the parents. This was made possible because in the 60's, financing the high schools was left to the local government whose budget allocation was very inadequate. This provided a fitting atmosphere for a strong village support in the maintenance and operation of these village schools.

(ii) With the shifting national policy on financial and administrative re-structuring in the 70's, the task of BHS financial assistance was placed on the local government. Simultaneously came the increased budget allocation for high schools, including the BHS, and direct financial support for these schools. Consequently, parental and community involvement in terms of financing decreased and with it came a decrease in the authority of designing the curriculum.

(iii) In the third period, the task of financing the system was taken over by the national government. As a necessary consequence, full administrative control was transferred from the community to the state.

The overall design of parental and community participation on the BHS system is

summarized in the diagram below.

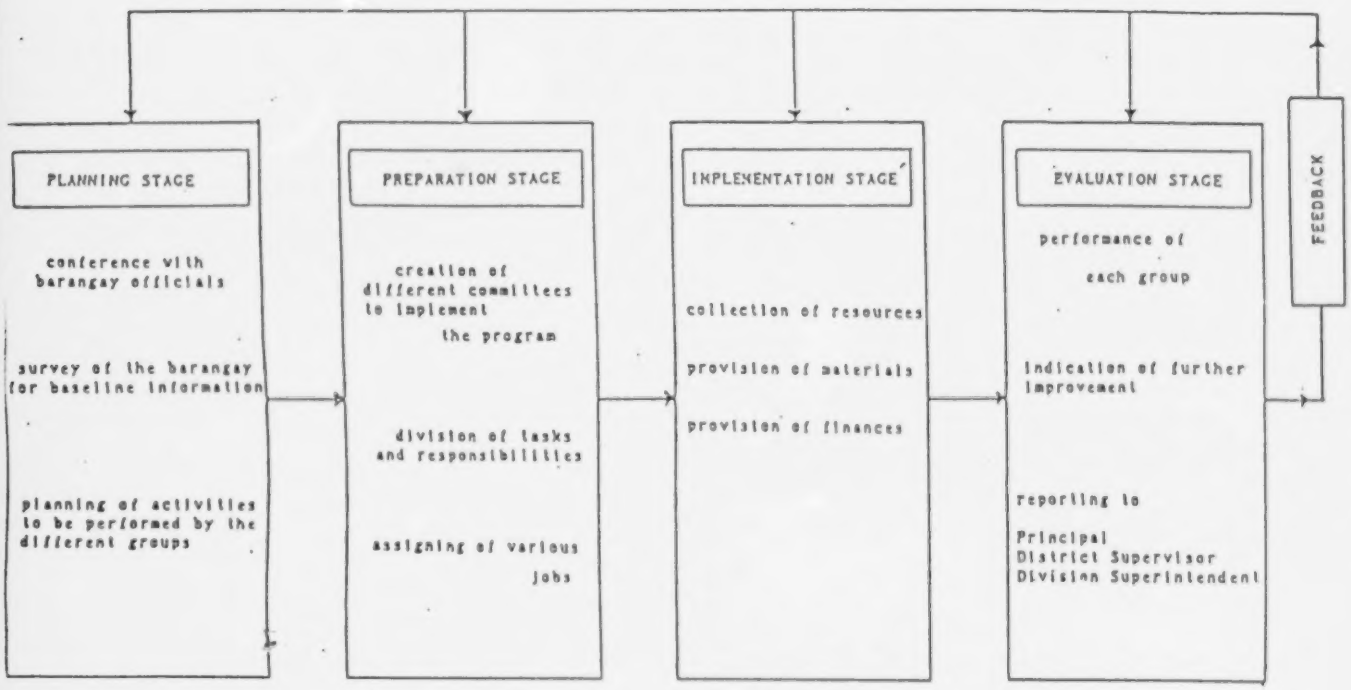

Fig. 6 OVERALL STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF BHS GOALS: COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

By investigating on the triumvirate structure of and relationship between national reform policies, institutional features of the BHS system and its role in the expansion of educational opportunity, this study has shown that the rural schools could provide some kind of the much needed relevant education. Some questions however, remain unanswered.

In Sec. 3 above, the quantitative measures of the performance of the BHS system by school expansion and enlargement of the population were presented as crude measures of access. An even more important element, the outcome of schooling, need to be considered; these are myriad and tracking down all of them is extremely difficult. In Sec. 4, in concentrating on the performance of the BHS as a rural school, I have focussed on the issue of assessment of school outcome. I have chosen the status of graduates as a factor indicating whether the schools have been effective in achieving their goals. Other factors need to be addressed for a fairer and more global evaluation of the schools to take place. These include: (1) student achievement at certain points during their study course, and (2) occupational skills or academic outcomes at the end of their high school course.

NOTES

1. Most of the essays in the book suggest so.
2. See also Educ. for Rural Development. A Portfolio of Studies, Vol. 4,4, UNESCO, 1982.
3. Geroge Reavis, Factors Controlling Attendance in Rural Schools, New York, AMS Press, 1972.
4. Extensive discussions appear in Basabas, 1988.
5. For details, see doctoral dissertation, Basabas, 1991.
6. See also George Reavis, op cit.
7. Of equal importance to the concept of rural development is that which constitutes a kind of social transformation of human relationships mirrored in the conserted effort in maintaining the barangay high schools.
8. Details are given in Basabas, op cit.

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